

Discourse 22

“Ki Tisa et Rosh Bnei Yisroel - When you take a head count of the children of Israel”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Pekudei, Shabbat Parshat Shekalim,
Shabbat Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Adar Sheini, 5727
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹⁵⁵⁹ “When you take a head count (*Ki Tisa* תשא כִּי) of the children of Israel etc.” The word “*Tisa* תשא” has two meanings. The first is that it means “to count,”¹⁵⁶⁰ and the second is that it means “to uplift.”¹⁵⁶¹ This is also understood from the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁵⁶² “Moshe said before the Holy One, blessed is He, ‘Master of the world, with what shall the horn of Israel be exalted?’ He replied, ‘With [the verse], ‘When you raise-*Ki Tisa* תשא כִּי.’”

However, at first glance, these two meanings seem to be opposites.¹⁵⁶³ This is because counting only applies when the thing [being counted] remains in its existence, with measure and limitation, just as it was before being counted, for otherwise, the matter of counting does not apply to it. In

¹⁵⁵⁹ Exodus 30:12

¹⁵⁶⁰ See Rashi and Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra HaKatzar to Exodus 30:12

¹⁵⁶¹ Also see Ohr HaTorah, Tisa p. 1,827; p. 1,838 and elsewhere.

¹⁵⁶² Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 10b

¹⁵⁶³ Also see the beginning of the discourse entitled “*Zeh Yitnu*” 5737.

contrast, elevation means that the thing departs from its place, and since space is a matter of measure and limitation, therefore, the elevation is that it comes to transcend measure and limitation, at which point counting does not apply to it, being that counting only applies to measure and limitation.

2.

Now, to understand this, we must preface by explaining the matter of counting.¹⁵⁶⁴ For, at first glance, it is not understood, as in the question posed in the Shnei Luchot HaBrit¹⁵⁶⁵ about what our sages, of blessed memory, said,¹⁵⁶⁶ “Blessing is only found in something that is concealed from the eye and not... in something that is counted, but rather, in something that is concealed from the eye.” This being so, what is the elevation of the matter of counting, about which the verse states, “When you take a head count (*Ki Tisa*-כִּי תִשָּׂא etc.),” until the conclusion of the matter, through which the matter of “to atone for your souls” is caused?¹⁵⁶⁷

However, the explanation is as stated in Shnei Luchot HaBrit,¹⁵⁶⁸ that in counting there are two matters. There is the matter of counting things of this material world. This is not a good counting, for since the count is of each particular

¹⁵⁶⁴ With respect to the coming section, see Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 1,828 and on; Also see *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1, p. 171 and on.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Bamidbar 347a

¹⁵⁶⁶ Taanit 8b; Talmud Bavli, Bava Metziya 42a

¹⁵⁶⁷ Exodus 30:15

¹⁵⁶⁸ Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Bamidbar 347a *ibid.*

individually, it is in a state of separation etc., which also indicates that it has a conclusion and end etc.

He explains that this is the meaning of the statement of our sages, of blessed memory, in the first chapter of Tractate Beitzah,¹⁵⁶⁹ “**All (Kol-כל)** whose way is to be counted” (which refers to the counting of this world), and “**That (Et-את)** whose way is to be counted” (which refers to the counting of the coming world). That is, [the aspect indicated by], “That (Et-את) whose way is to be counted” is a higher than “All (Kol-כל) whose way is to be counted.” For, about the view that states, “All (Kol-כל) whose way is to be counted,” there is dispute as to whether the thing is considered significant and thus is not nullified [in a majority]. In contrast, about the view that states, “That (Et-את) whose way is to be counted,” all opinions agree that it is not nullified [in a majority].

However, we still must understand this. For, at first glance, we find a superiority in the aspect of “All-Kol-כל,” as the verse states,¹⁵⁷⁰ “For all (Ki Kol-כי) that is in the heavens and earth [is Yours],” which Targum translates as, “He unites the heavens and the earth.” That is, “All-Kol-כל” refers to the *Sefirah* of Foundation-*Yesod*¹⁵⁷¹ which causes connection and bonding etc. This being so, the aspect of “All-Kol-כל” is higher

¹⁵⁶⁹ Talmud Bavli, Beitzah 3b

¹⁵⁷⁰ Chronicles I 29:11

¹⁵⁷¹ See Zohar I 17a; 31a, and elsewhere; Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Two (*Yesod*); Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 36. [It is also noteworthy that the words of the above verse, “For all-*Ki Kol*-כי-80,” share the same numerical value as Foundation-*Yesod*-יסוד-80.”]

than the aspect of “That-*Et*” which refers to the *Sefirah* of Kingship-*Malchut*.¹⁵⁷²

This may be understood based on the verse,¹⁵⁷³ “[I am the One] who forms light and creates darkness.” About this it states in Talmud,¹⁵⁷⁴ “It is written ‘evil-*Ra*’ but we read it euphemistically as ‘[and creates] all-*HaKol*.’” This being so, we find that the sages called “evil-*Ra*” by the name “all-*Kol*,” such that this only is a euphemism for “evil-*Ra*.” In other words, the word “all-*Kol*” includes all matters, even the shiny husk (*Kelipat Nogah*) and even lower etc. About this the verse states,¹⁵⁷⁵ “Fear *HaShem* all the earth (*Kol HaAretz*).” That is, even those who are in the aspect of “all-*Kol*” (“all the earth-*Kol HaAretz*”) should “fear *HaShem*,” except that this is the lower fear (*Yirah*) of *HaShem*.

However, there is a higher fear of *HaShem*, about which the verse states,¹⁵⁷⁶ “Fear *HaShem-Yiroo et HaShem*” [in which the word “*et*” means “that which is subordinate-*et HaTaphel*,”] meaning that one is [utterly] “subordinate-*et HaTaphel*” to His Name *HaShem* and, in and of himself, has no desires of his own.

¹⁵⁷² See Pardes Rimonim, Shaar 23 (Shaar Erchei HaKinuyim) Ch. 1; [It is also noteworthy that the 22 letters from *Alef*-א to *Tav*-ת which are indicated by the word “That-*Et*,” which are “ש”ט”פ”צ”ק”ר”ש”ת” equal 1,495, and with the cycling of the *Eleph*-א”ל-1000 back to *Aleph*-א”ל-1, they equal Kingship-*Malchut*-מלכות-496.]

¹⁵⁷³ Isaiah 45:7

¹⁵⁷⁴ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 11b

¹⁵⁷⁵ Psalms 33:8; See Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar 13b

¹⁵⁷⁶ Psalms 34:10

¹⁵⁷⁷ Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 6a; Bava Kamma 41b, 82a

With the above in mind, we can understand the distinction between, “That (*Et*-את) whose way is to be counted,” and, “All (*Kol*-כל) whose way is to be counted.” That is, when it comes to, “That (*Et*-את) whose way is to be counted,” even though it is the aspect of number, it nonetheless is in a state of utter nullification (*Bittul*), literally “that which is subordinate-*et HaTaphel*-את הטפל.” Therefore, from such a number, the forces of externality cannot derive vitality. On the contrary, within this aspect of number there is a drawing down of awesome blessing, as indicated by the verse,¹⁵⁷⁸ “Too numerous to count.”

In contrast, when it comes to “All (*Kol*-כל) whose way is to be counted,” being that one is not utterly nullified, but is in the aspect of an [independent] existence, there can possibly be a chaining down from this of an opposite matter etc. This is the meaning of what our sages, of blessed memory, said, “Blessing does not rest on something that is counted, but rather, on something that is concealed from the eye.” For, in something that is counted, the aspect of the evil eye (*Ra Ayin*-רע עין) can derive vitality etc.¹⁵⁷⁹

3.

However, we sometimes find that even in someone that is counted and is not concealed from the eye, in which, in and of itself, it applies that derivation of vitality could be given to evil eye (*Ra Ayin*-רע עין), even so, the evil eye has no dominion

¹⁵⁷⁸ Genesis 32:13; Hosea 2:1

¹⁵⁷⁹ Me'orei Ohr, Ma'arechet Ayin, Section 14.

over him. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁵⁸⁰ “The evil eye has no dominion over the seed of Yosef, as the verse states,¹⁵⁸¹ ‘May they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land.’ Just as the evil eye has no dominion over the fish in the sea, so likewise, the evil eye has no dominion over the seed of Yosef.”

The explanation is that, as known¹⁵⁸² the superiority of Yosef, over and above the tribes and forefathers, is that when Yosef made a receptacle and garment by way of the natural order (in that he asked the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers to mention him to Pharaoh),¹⁵⁸³ for him this was a deficiency, to the point that he was punished for it.¹⁵⁸⁴

In contrast, this was not so of Yaakov. For, we find that Yaakov indeed made a receptacle and garment by way of the natural order, such as in the matter of the sticks¹⁵⁸⁵ and the like. However, even so, for him this was not considered to be a deficiency.

This is because the level of Yosef was higher than the level of Yaakov, that is, higher than the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), and relative to such a level, even making a receptacle and garment by way of the natural order is considered to be a deficiency etc. Because of this great level of Yosef the evil eye had no dominion over him, even when drawn into a place in which, in and of itself, it applies for there to be dominion of the

¹⁵⁸⁰ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 20a

¹⁵⁸¹ Genesis 48:16

¹⁵⁸² See Sefer HaMaamarim 5677 p. 102 and on.

¹⁵⁸³ Genesis 40:14

¹⁵⁸⁴ See Midrash Bereishit Rabba 89:3; Rashi to Genesis 40:23

¹⁵⁸⁵ Genesis 30:37 and on

evil eye. This is why in him there also was the matter of counting, but in a way that there could be a drawing down of blessing in a way that is beyond count.

From the above we can also understand this as it relates to the aspect of “All-*Kol*-כל,” (“All (*Kol*-כל) whose way is to be counted”) the aspect of Foundation-*Yesod* (the level of Yosef).¹⁵⁸⁶ That is, even though, in and of itself, it is applicable for there to be the evil eye upon it, for which reason it is impossible for there to be the matter of numeration in it, nevertheless, when there is a drawing down in him from the aspect of the Singular One of the world, this being the matter of “He unites the heavens and the earth,” (brought about through a drawing down from an even higher level) then it does not apply for the evil eye to be upon him. It is therefore possible for there to be the matter of counting as it is in the aspect of “That-*Et*-את” (“That (*Et*-את) whose way is to be counted”), which is the aspect of counting as it is in a state that is beyond count (as explained above).

This is also the meaning of what the verse states about the seed of Yosef, “May they proliferate abundantly like fish within the land.” That is, they are like the fish in the sea over whom the evil eye has no dominion. To explain, the “sea-*Yam*-ים” is the aspect of the concealed world (*Alma d'Itkasiya*), in which the creatures within it are in a state of nullification (*Bittul*) to their Source, in the aspect of “that which is subordinate-*et HaTaphel*-הטפל את” (“Fear *HaShem-Yiroo et HaShem*-יהו"ה את”).

¹⁵⁸⁶ Etz Chayim, Shaar 26 (Shaar HaTzelem) Ch. 3; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 36 and elsewhere.

However, the novelty here is that even when [the seed of Yosef] are “within the land-*HaAretz*-הָאֶרֶץ,” which is the aspect of the revealed world (*Alma d’Itgaliya*), (within which, in and of itself, there only is the aspect of “Fear *HaShem*-ה'” all the earth (*Kol HaAretz*-כָּל הָאֶרֶץ),” there nonetheless is a drawing down of the matter of nullification of self (*Bittul*) like the fish of the sea. It is then that even the aspect of counting is in a state that is beyond count, “like the sand of the sea that cannot be counted.”¹⁵⁸⁷

4.

This then, is the meaning of “*Ki Tisa*-כִּי תִשָּׂא” to which there are two meanings, one being a term of “counting,” and the other being a term of “uplifting.” For, in order for it to be possible to count in a desirable way, as in the continuation of the verse,¹⁵⁸⁸ “so that there will not be a plague amongst them when counting them” (since the evil eye has dominion over that which is counted etc.),¹⁵⁸⁹ to the point of counting in a state that is beyond count, this is through the matter of “uplifting,” and in a way that “you uplift the head (*Tisa et Rosh*-תִּשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ) of the children of Israel,” specifying “*et*-את,” that they should be in the aspect indicated by the word “*et*-את,” meaning, “that which is subordinate-*et HaTaphel*-הַטָּפֵּל,” as in, “Fear *HaShem-Yiroo et HaShem*-ה' יִרְאוּ אֶת ה'”.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Hosea 2:1

¹⁵⁸⁸ Exodus 30:11 *ibid*.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Rashi to Exodus 30:11

This is also the meaning of the words,¹⁵⁹⁰ “All who pass through the census,” about which it states in Talmud Yerushalmi,¹⁵⁹¹ “All who passed through the sea,” referring to the splitting of the sea, [which is the matter of] the bonding of the sea (*Yam*-ים) with the dry land (*Yabashah*-יבשה).¹⁵⁹² That is, even in the revealed world (*Alma d'Itgaliya*) there is a drawing down of the nullification (*Bittul*) of the aspect [indicated by] “*et*-את” of the concealed world (*Alma d'Itkasiya*).

Now, as this relates to the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of each and every Jew, is that even when his soul is manifest within the body (the revealed world) there is a drawing down and revelation of the essence of his soul (the concealed world). This is also the matter of “you uplift the head (*Tisa et Rosh*-תשא את ראש),” which refers to elevating and uplifting them even higher than the aspect of the “head-*Rosh*-ראש.”

This ascent and elevation comes through the matter of charity (*Tzedakah*). This is as in the above-mentioned teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁵⁹³ “Moshe said before the Holy One, blessed is He, ‘Master of the world, with what shall the horn of Israel be exalted?’ He replied, ‘With [the verse], ‘When you raise-*Ki Tisa*-כי תשא.’” That is, “If you seek to elevate their heads, take atonement from them by way of donation to charity.”¹⁵⁹⁴ This is because as the verse states, “charity will uplift a nation.”¹⁵⁹⁵

¹⁵⁹⁰ Exodus 30:13

¹⁵⁹¹ Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim 1:3

¹⁵⁹² See Sefer HaMaamarim 5678 p. 254 and on, and elsewhere.

¹⁵⁹³ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 10b

¹⁵⁹⁴ Rashi to Bava Batra 10b *ibid*.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Proverbs 14:34 (Bava Batra *ibid*.; Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tisa 5; See Torah Ohr, Bereishit 1b)

Now, this matter also comes about through spiritual charity, which generally is the matter of “spreading the wellsprings [of the teachings of Chassidus] to the outside,” through which we merit the revelation of Moshiach,¹⁵⁹⁶ at which time there will be the fulfillment of the prophecy,¹⁵⁹⁷ “Your Teacher will no longer be hidden behind His garment,” in the true and complete redemption with the coming of our righteous Moshiach.

¹⁵⁹⁶ See the famous letter of the Baal Shem Tov, printed in Keter Shem Tov 1; For a translation see The Way of The Baal Shem Tov, a translation of a compilation of teachings from the Baal Shem Tov – Tzava’at HaRivash, and elsewhere.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Isaiah 30:2; Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 36.